

An open letter to our Regional, Provincial and Country leaders,

I am taking the liberty of writing each of you, to better understand your personal position regarding the **BALA FALLS HYDRO PROJECT** and, to appeal to your better judgement and your support for its cancellation or long term delay for reassessment.

My wife and I followed our two sons and moved to Bala three years ago, after having cottaged in Muskoka for more than 37 years, the past 26 of those in Bala. I have tried to keep an open mind to the Bala Falls Hydro Project because I believe in green energy but, as I have listened **CAREFULLY** to both sides of the argument, it became more and more evident this project has **ASOLUTELY NO BENEFIT** for the local community vs. the downside which is quite substantial for **BALA** and **ITS SURROUNDING REGION** not to mention, **ALL ONTARIO TAXPAYERS**.

To try and resolve areas of misinformation, the following highlights my understanding of the situation:

- Many residents in the region and many politicians seem to believe this project is simply **REPLACING A POWER PLANT** which stood on this spot in the past so, what is the big deal? It is after all, "Green Power". The big deal is that that the original power plant's footprint was 256sq-ft and the current proposal has a **FOOTPRINT** over 6000sq-ft; that's an **INCREASE OF MORE THAN 23X** not to mention, it wipes out everything from the highway to the river adjacent to our beautiful falls, including the natural parkland which includes the historic Bala Portage.
- I understand it will produce a maximum of 4.5 megawatts at peak production under ideal circumstances. Ontario requires most of its peak energy in the summer months when water levels are lowest, rendering the value of this plant mediocre at best, when needed most. Swift River will have to reduce nearly all **SCENIC FLOW** over the falls for much of the summer season just to retain enough water pressure for the turbines. **We** are already sending Ontario's surplus power to the US well below our cost to produce it, **AND** at a significant loss to taxpayers.
- I realize this looks like another "not in my backyard" issue. In my experience, most of the people opposed to this project are strong proponents of green initiatives. To that end, our same representatives who are fighting this particular Power Plant, have in the last year alone, approved three new **SOLAR POWER** projects in the area, which will provide up to 1.5 Megawatts of Green Power from the region.
- The estimated 18 months of construction will be **DEVASTATING TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY** due to many travellers, area commuters and tourists re-routing to avoid Bala, particularly during the hugely important high season. This re-routing often carries on long after the highways go back to normal and the local businesses suffer immeasurably well beyond the construction project. We learned this during the town sewer project and are still working back from those losses to our economy but, that project was truly needed for long term growth and sustainability.
- Another serious concern is **SAFETY**. The beautiful rock formations that give this falls its unique iconic setting, become a playground and swimming area for locals and visitors, once the flows are reduced naturally by the waning water levels of Lake Muskoka during the summer months. They play on the rocks and swim at the base. With the proposed plant and its outlet next to the base of the falls, this will become a dangerous safety hazard and will eliminate another **AGELESS ATTRACTION** in the town. It may even come to require fences to keep us away from the rocks.

- We already have three hydro power plants in the Bala area, two on the Moon River and one in town on another river flowing into the Moon River. Council has recently leased this plant to a new company which is committed to upgrading it, **THEREBY** raising efficiency and output.
- Bala is today considered by many as one of the prettiest towns in the greater Muskoka Region, and the primary reason for that is the Bala Falls. **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC** put Muskoka on the world stage as a first-class destination, and this falls is one of its best examples of the natural landscape. The Bala Falls is the centrepiece of town **AND** our primary appeal as a picturesque destination for tourists and the many wedding parties who choose Bala, to be photographed by the falls. This draw is a significant aspect of our local economy. My son's wedding photos at the falls were a big part of the appeal of Bala and would **NOT HAVE BEEN AN OPTION** because of this proposed eyesore. This power **PLANT** would **REPLACE** the natural site of some of those photos and would become the **BACKDROP** of many others. It will destroy Bala's primary photo shoot for all who come here. This is insane.
- It has also been argued the energy wasted during the significant blasting, hauling and challenging construction of this facility when measured against its ultimate low production of largely unrequired energy surplus, will in fact produce **NET-NEGATIVE RESULTS** well into the future from a green perspective, not counting the **HUGE EXPENCE TO ONTARIO TAXPAYERS** at a time when you are trying to reduce budgets and tackle the deficit.

The decision for this project was made ten years ago during our Liberal Government's initiative to reduce greenhouse gasses through reducing our reliance on coal fired generation, a worthy goal that I applaud, and one which has gone a long way to improve Ontario's air quality. As a result of that success, the timing and the need for this particular project is way past any relevant benefit to anyone except the Project Manager, Swift River. When you balance the lack of any upside for many years to come, if ever; the numbers of much more acceptable alternatives; and compare that to the large number of negative outcomes being thrust upon this wonderful town and its **PRIMARY TOURIST ATTRACTION**, I suggest an indefinite delay **AT THE VERY LEAST, or PREFERABLY**, scrapping of this project, is in the best interest of all Ontarians and visitors to our beautiful region. All of Muskoka, not just Bala, loses with this choice.

A **RECENT INDEPENDENT SURVEY** by Protean Strategies, had these results: 83.2% of all who responded do not want a power plant at the Bala Falls (rises to 85.3% in the Bala Postal Code). I have watched a great town be torn apart, not because anyone really wants this project but, because some have chosen to cooperate to make the best of an ill-conceived, **LOSE-LOSE** situation.

I understand there are still some incomplete applications and hurdles in the process of approval for this project, not the least of which has been raised recently by the **WAHTA MOHAWKS** whose **HISTORIC PORTAGE** is on this exact sight. I also believe the current proposal not only has grown significantly in size from the originally approved plan, it absolutely **DWARFS THE FOOTPRINT** of the old plant that once stood there. These concerns provide appropriate reasons for a delay on this decision, to allow more thought around the **ABSOLUTE UNSUITABILITY OF THIS SITE**. Please recognize the mistakes made here and act now before Swift River begins clear-cutting the Bala Portage causing irreparable damage to Bala.

RESPECTFULLY,

Ted Farley,
Bala, Ontario